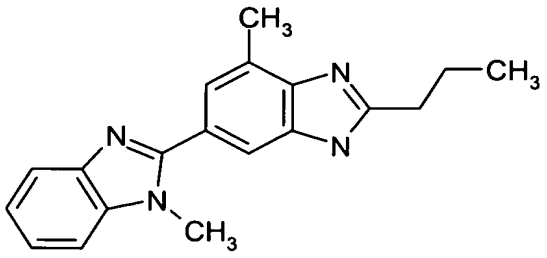
We Claim:

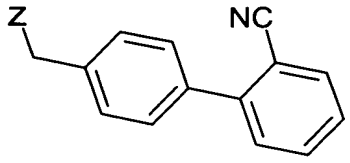
1. A process for preparing telmisartan, comprising:

(a) reacting 2-*n*-propyl-4-methyl-6-(1'-methylbenzimidazol-2'-yl)benzimidazole (I)



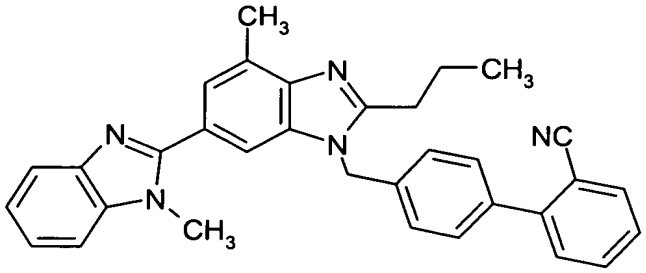
(I)

with a compound of formula (IV)



(IV)

wherein Z is a leaving group, to obtain a compound 2-cyano-4'-[2"-*n*-propyl-4"-methyl-6"-(1"'-methylbenzimidazol-2"'-yl)benzimidazol-1"-ylmethyl]biphenyl (V)



(V); and

(b) hydrolyzing the nitrile function of compound (V) obtained from step (a) into the acid function to obtain telmisartan.

2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the product of step (a) is worked up before step (b) is performed.

3. The process according to claim 1, wherein the telmisartan product of step (b) is worked up and converted into the hydrochloride.

4. The process according to claim 1, wherein the product of step (a) is worked up before step (b) is performed and the telmisartan product of step (b) is worked up and converted into the hydrochloride.

5. The process according to claim 1, wherein Z is a halogen atom or a substituted sulfonyloxy group.

6. The process according to claim 1, wherein Z is a bromine atom.

7. The process according to claim 1, wherein step (a) is carried out in a first solvent selected from methylene chloride, diethyl ether, tetrahydrofuran, dioxane, dimethylsulfoxide, dimethylformamide, dimethylacetamide, dimethylformamide/*tert*-butanol, dimethylacetamide/*tert*-butanol, toluene, benzene, or a mixture thereof.

8. The process according to claim 7, wherein step (a) is carried out in the presence of an acid-binding agent.

9. The process according to claim 8, wherein the acid-binding agent is selected from sodium carbonate, potassium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, sodium methoxide, potassium methoxide, potassium *tert*-pentoxide, potassium *tert*-butoxide, potassium *n*-butoxide, sodium hydride, triethylamine, and pyridine.

10. The process according to claim 1, wherein step (a) is carried out at a temperature between 0°C and 100°C.

11. The process according to claim 2, wherein step (a) is carried out at a temperature between 0°C and 100°C.

12. The process according to claim 3, wherein step (a) is carried out at a temperature between 0°C and 100°C.

13. The process according to claim 4, wherein step (a) is carried out at a temperature between 0°C and 100°C.

14. The process according to claim 1, wherein in step (a) the reaction of the compound (I) with the compound of formula (IV) is carried out in a first solvent selected from dimethylsulfoxide, dimethylformamide, dimethylacetamide, dimethylformamide/*tert*-butanol, and dimethylacetamide/*tert*-butanol in the presence of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, or potassium *tert*-butoxide at a temperature between 0°C and 30°C.

15. The process according to claim 1, wherein after step (a) has been carried out, the first solvent is removed and the residue is treated with a supplementary solvent in which the compound (V) has only limited solubility or is moderately soluble in the heat.

16. The process according to claim 15, wherein crystals of the compound (V) are precipitated by cooling the supplementary solvent containing the compound (V).

17. The process according to claim 16, wherein the crystals of the compound (V) are suction filtered.

18. The process according to claim 16, wherein the crystals of the compound (V) are suction filtered and washed with the supplementary solvent.

19. The process according to claim 17, wherein the crystals of the compound (V) are dried at elevated temperature.

20. The process according to claim 15, wherein the supplementary solvent is an alcohol, an aromatic hydrocarbon, an ether, or water.

21. The process according to claim 1, wherein step (b) is carried out in a second solvent selected from water, an organic solvent, or a mixture thereof, in the presence of an acid or a base at temperatures between 80°C and 200°C.

22. The process according to claim 21, wherein the organic solvent is methanol, ethanol, *n*-propanol, isopropanol, tetrahydrofuran, dioxane, ethylene glycol, propyleneglycol, diglyme, dimethylsulfoxide, or diethylene glycol monomethyl ether.

23. The process according to claim 21, wherein step (b) is carried out in the presence of an acid selected from trifluoroacetic acid, trichloroacetic acid, hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, and phosphoric acid.

24. The process according to claim 21, wherein step (b) is carried out in the presence of a base selected from lithium hydroxide, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, cesium hydroxide, and calcium hydroxide, or an anhydrides thereof.

25. The process according to claim 21, wherein step (b) is carried out in a high-boiling solvent system selected from ethylene glycol/water and propyleneglycol/water in the presence of a base at temperatures between 140°C and 200°C.

26. The process according to claim 25, wherein the base is potassium hydroxide and the temperature is between 155°C and 185°C.

27. The process according to claim 21, wherein the telmisartan product of step (b) is worked up by eliminating the second solvent, the residue obtained is optionally diluted with water and taken up in aqueous hydrochloric acid, and the telmisartan hydrochloride that crystallizes out is cooled if necessary, then suction filtered and optionally dried.

28. The process according to claim 27, wherein the telmisartan hydrochloride is converted into the acid form.